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EU-27

Livestock and Products

EU-15 increases age for mandatory BSE testing 2008

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Report Highlights:

On October 14, 2008, the Standing Committee on the Food Chain & Animal Health (SCoFCAH) decided to increase the mandatory testing age for mad cow disease (BSE) in the EU-15 to 48 months. Currently testing age is 30 months for healthy cattle at slaughter and 24 months for all at risk cattle. It is expected that this new measure can lead to a 25-35 percent decrease in testing of cattle at slaughter depending on the Member State. The decrease in testing of at risk cattle will be much lower.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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On October 14, 2008, the Standing Committee on the Food Chain & Animal Health (SCoFAH) decided to increase the mandatory testing age for mad cow disease (BSE) in the EU-15 to 48 months. Currently all healthy slaughtered cattle aged over 30 months and all cattle above 24 months deemed to be at risk of catching bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) must be tested.

Member States (MS) intending to apply for an increase in the testing age are required to meet 4 criteria:

- They have properly implemented the Processed-Animal Proteins (POP) ban for at least 6 years.
- They have systematically tested animals over 30 months.
- They have a rigorous traceability system for cattle.
- They have a downward trend in BSE cases.

This measure follows the scientific advice from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) that the minimum testing ages can be raised without any significant additional risk, as it is considered that “due to the age limit increase it is estimated that less than one positive case annually in the whole EU-15 could be missed”. After a 1-month scrutiny by the European Parliament, the European Commission (EC) is expected to finally approve this proposal, which should then come into effect on January 1, 2009.

This new proposal is expected to lead to a decrease in testing of healthy cattle at slaughter of between 25 and 35 percent depending on the slaughter age in different MS. The decrease in testing of at risk cattle will be much lower. In 2007, the EU-15 performed some 8.4 million BSE tests¹, of which about 7.1 million on healthy cattle at slaughter.

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¹ [Report on the monitoring and testing of ruminants for the presence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy \(TSE\) in the EU in 2007.](#)